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Our Man
in the
Kremlin

'Dead Drops' and Red Surveillance

Ninth of a series

By Frank Gibney

Col. Penkovsky's Paris visit was his last to the West. Although his superiors in Military Intelligence later made several proposals to send him on foreign assignments, it became clear that the State Security police were watching him, for some reason. Penkovsky himself believed that the State Security's surveillance arose from the belated discovery that his father had been a White officer in the Revolution. He correctly believed that they did not suspect the real truth: that he had volunteered to do espionage for the West.

Back in Moscow, he coolly continued to deliver information to his American and British contacts. He used three standard intelligence methods: 1) carefully arranged "chance encounters"; 2) meetings at the homes of British or Americans he might normally be expected to visit; 3) the device of the "dead drop," the inconspicuous hiding-place where a package can be left for a later pick-up, without the need for either party to the transaction to meet face-to-face.

On Oct. 21, just two weeks after his return from Paris, Penkovsky had his first meeting with one of his contacts. At 9 p.m. he was walking near the Balchug Hotel, smoking a cigaret, and holding in his hand a package wrapped in white paper. A man walked up to him, wearing an overcoat, unbuttoned, and also smoking a cigaret. "Mr. Alex," he said in English, "I am from your two friends who send you the word we have come." The package changed

hands. Another hoard of documents and observations on Soviet military preparations, was on its way westward.

"Alex," for such was his code name, kept on collecting and transmitting information, without skimping on his normal daily rounds. More than ever, he maintained contacts with his friends in the Army. He exuded confidence.

IN DECEMBER Penkovsky resumed meetings with his Western contacts, but the risks involved grew ever more apparent. On Jan. 5, after he had passed some more film to Mrs. Janet Anne Chisholm, wife of a British embassy attache, in an elaborately casual encounter, he noticed a small car, violating traffic regulations, had swung around to observe them.

Later that month the same car appeared again at one of his meetings, a small brown sedan with the license plate SHA 61-45, driven by a man in a black overcoat. Penkovsky wrote a letter to a pre-arranged address in London, advising that no further meetings with Mrs. Chisholm be attempted.

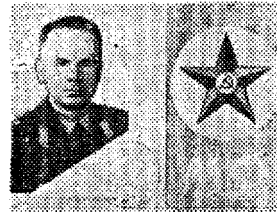
From that time on, Penkovsky relied on the two remaining methods of communication. He either handed over material in the houses of Westerners, to which he was invited in the course of his duties, or relied on the relative anonymity of dead-drops which were, of course, the safest way to communicate. But they had their own peculiar suspenses and horrors. In effect, an agent working through dead-drops finds himself playing a grown-up game of blind-man's buff.

Through the spring of 1962 Penkovsky's existence was a constant selection of these inconspicuous hiding places. Drop No.

1 was located in the doorway of Numer 5-6 Pushkin Street, behind a radiator painted dark green. Messages to be sent were placed in a matchbox wrapped in light blue paper, bound with cellophane tape and wire, and hung on a certain hook behind the radiator.

When Penkovsky had something to leave there, he was to make a black mark on Post number 35 on the Kutuzov Prospect. He would then put the materials in the drop, and make two telephone calls to numbers G 3-26-87 and G 3-26-94, each with a set number of rings. . . . And so it went. Such are the complexities of a working intelligence operation.

Through it all, Penkovsky continued to jot down his observations and his own warning to the West. The following excerpt discusses one of the most chilling aspects of



Soviet war preparation: unrestricted chemical warfare.

By Oleg Penkovsky

It is not enough for Khrushchev to prepare for atomic and hydrogen warfare. He is also preparing for chemical warfare. A special 7th Directorate in the general staff is involved in working out methods of chemical and bacteriological warfare.

The Chief Chemical Directorate of the Ministry of Defense is also concerned with the problem of chemical and bacteriological war-

fare. We also have the Voroshilov Military Academy of Chemical Defense, several military-chemical schools and scientific-research institutes and laboratories in the fields of chemistry and bacteriology. They are all working on these military projects.

Near Moscow there is a special proving ground for chemical defense. I know a new gas has been invented which is colorless, tasteless, and without odor. The gas is avowed to be very effective and highly toxic. The secret of the gas is not known to me. It has been named "American." Why this name was chosen, I can only guess.

Many places in the country have experimental centers for testing various chemical and bacteriological devices. One such base is in Kaluga. The commanding officer of this base is Nikolay Varentsov, the brother of Marshal Varentsov.

Near the city of Kalinin, on a small island in the Volga, there is a special bacteriological storage place. Here they keep large containers with bacilli of plagues and other contagious diseases. The entire island is surrounded by barbed wire and is very securely guarded. But my readers in the West must not be under any illusions. This is not the only place where there are such containers.

Artillery Equipped

Soviet artillery units all are regularly equipped with chemical warfare shells. They are at the gun sights, and our artillery is routinely trained in their use. And let there be no doubt: If hostilities should erupt, the Soviet Army would use chemical weapons against us. The political decision has already been made and our strategic mil-

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ilitary planners have developed a doctrine which permits the commander in the field to decide whether to use chemical weapons, and when and where.

I recently read an article entitled "Principles of the Employment of Chemical Missiles" of the Top Secret military publication "Information Collection of Missile Units and Artillery." It is being distributed this month, August, 1961. (This publication is intended to explain the latest in tactical and operational doctrine to the highest ranking officers, i.e., major general and above.)

The article wastes no time and minces no words. It opens with the statement that under modern conditions, highly toxic chemical agents are one of the most powerful means of destroying the enemy.

There is no mention made of waiting until the enemy uses chemical weapons; there is no reference to the need for a high-level political decision for the use of such weapons.

From the start to finish the article makes it clear that this decision has been made, that chemical shells and missiles may be considered just ordinary weapons available to the military commander, to be used rou-



SECRET EXPOSED—Contents of a secret drawer where Penkovsky kept camera, radio receiver and other tools of his trade while in Moscow. Photograph was made by the Soviet secret police after his arrest.

tinely by him when the situation calls for it. The article specifically states, "The commander of the army (front) makes the decision to use chemical weapons. . . ."

The authors add that one of the most important uses for chemical missiles will be

the destruction of the enemy's nuclear strike capability. Specific mention is made of the "Little John," "Honest John," "Lacrosse," "Corporal," "Redstone," and "Sergeant" units, the width and depth of their dispersed formations under tactical conditions, and their vulner-

abilities to the chemical attack. Also American cruise missile and atomic artillery units. The article contains the usual precautions about the necessity to prevent damage to friendly troops, and discussed the operational situations in which chemical weapons could be used to greatest advantage. This is how it concludes:

"The purpose of this article is to present the main fundamental principles of using chemical missiles. Those principles should not, under any circumstances, be considered as firmly established, because they can be defined with greater precision as practical experience is accumulated."

Soviet officers generally consider Americans to be extremely lax in matters of training and discipline for defense against chemical attack. I have heard that American soldiers even boast of throwing away their gas masks and other protective equipment, claiming they have lost them. I can hardly believe this, but even if it is only partly true, it is a training deficiency which must be corrected immediately. Such crucial flaws in an enemy's defensive armor are not overlooked by Soviet planners.

WEDNESDAY: *The surveillance net tightens around Penkovsky and Wynne; the party at Marshal Varentsov's villa; Marshal Malinovsky boasts how the Americans swallow their 'pill' over Berlin.*

Condensed from the forthcoming book, *The Penkovsky Papers*, © 1965, Doubleday & Company, Inc.

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